(b) The track from Baltal is maintained by the State Government and normal upkeep of the track is undertaken by them on a regular basis every year.

(c) and (d) Development and management of pilgrim centres is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India provides central financial assistance to State Governments and funds are released keeping in view the inter-se-priority of projects, subject to availability of funds, on the basis of the projects submitted by them.

Tourism Infrastructure in Punjab

2779 SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
SARDAR GURCHARNA SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received proposals from the Punjab Government relating to construction of Tourism infrastructure and other facilities in connection with celebrations of Tricentenary of birth of Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The Ministry of Tourism have received the following project proposals from Punjab Government in connection with celebrations of Tricentenary of birth of Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib:—

1. SEL Show at Gurudwara Anandpur Sahib.
2. Illumination at Gurudwara Teg Bahadur, Anandpur Sahib.
3. Illumination at Gurudwara Mai Jito Ji, Anandpur Sahib.
4. Illumination at Gurudwara Kila Anandgarh Sahib.
5. Illumination at Gurudwara Kesh Garh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib.
6. Tourist Reception Centre at Anandpur Sahib.

Sanctions of these projects have been issued and first instalment has also been released to the State Government.

Importance of Domestic Tourism

2780 SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the domestic tourism has not been given the importance and attention it deserves;

(b) if so, the steps taken to develop the infrastructure for the promotion of domestic tourism; and

(c) the details of the scheme prepared for the purpose for Ninth Plan State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Promotion of domestic tourism is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has been providing financial assistance to the State Governments for the creation of facilities for domestic tourism such as construction of tourist complexes, way-side amenities and cafeterias; purchase of adventure sports equipments; flood-lighting and refurbishment and landscaping of monuments and heritage properties, setting up Sound & Light shows, construction of yatriniwas, yatrikas; promotion of handicrafts and folk culture, craft melas, important festivals and fairs. Publicity brochures on various tourist destinations have been brought out for the information of tourists. These schemes are included in the Ninth Plan budget of the Ministry.

Weaning Away of Tourists from South East Asian Countries

2781 SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian tourism market has suffered a loss in the last two years and a large number of tourists have been weaned away to nearby South East Asian countries;

(b) if so, whether any efforts have been made to find out the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details thereof and steps taken to attract foreign tourists?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) (a) and (b) There has been positive growth of 3.8% and 7.7% in foreign tourist arrivals in India during 1997 and 1996 respectively.

(c) Steps taken by the Government to attract more tourists include improvement of infrastructural facilities, strengthening of marketing efforts and sustained human resource development.

Decline in Tourism

2782. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA:
DR. MOHAN BABU:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tourism traffic to India is in a downwards direction;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government to increase the tourism traffic?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) (a) and (b) The tourist traffic during the first eleven months of the year 1998 registered a marginal decline of 0.6% as compared to corresponding period of the previous year. The decline is primarily due to economic crisis in South East Asian countries, general economic recession, fall in business tourists etc.

(c) Steps taken to increase the tourism traffic in the country include improvement of infrastructural facilities, strengthening of publicity and promotional efforts, human resource development, etc.

International Tourist Centres

2783. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) what is the criteria to identify the centre for international tourism in the country;

(b) if so, the details and number of tourist centres State-wise; and

(c) whether there is a plan to include Kanyakumari as one of the international tourist centre?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG): (a) and (b) The Government does not have any system for declaring any place as an international tourist centre However, depending on the attraction and popularity of a place, the State Governments develop Tourist Centres and the Central Government extends fianancial assistance for such projects.

(c) Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu is one of the important tourist centres. The Ministry of Tourism has extended fiancial assistance for the following projects in Kanyakumari:—

1. Construction of 8 beach cottages
2. Cafetaria at Kanyakumari
3. Tourist amenities at bathing ghats
4. Ferry Launch
5. Floodlighting of Vivekananda Rock Memorial
6. Upgrading facilitites at the ITDC Unit
7. Beautification of Beach
8. A/C Units at Kanyakumari
9. View Tower at Kanyakumari
10. Ferry Launch Kanyakumari Vivekananda Rock Memorial